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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

In Today's Papers

Basbug Warns on Northern Iraq, Constitutional Change in Turkey
All papers report the head of the Turkish land forces, General Ilker Basbug, issued a "tough warning" to the US related to the activities of the PKK in northern Iraq. Speaking at the opening of the military academy's academic year in Ankara, Basbug said now was the time for action against the terrorists. Basbug pointed to the fact that the developments in north of Iraq have given "political, legal, military and psychological strength" to Kurds living in the region. "We must be careful about the developments in northern Iraq as these may give some of our citizens a feeling of belonging to this region," said Basbug. He stressed that the US must understand that the presence of the terror organization in north of Iraq is a serious threat to Turkey. "The US must understand that a solution reached without Turkey's backing in Iraq won't be a lasting one," Basbug added.

Basbug also said the Turkish military cannot be impartial in debates about secularism, stressing the military has always protected the structure and the characteristics of the Turkish state. He said opponents of secularism and Kurdish separatists have the same aim -- "undermining the nation state in Turkey." Basbug said efforts to advance cultural differences for the sake of boosting freedom might lead Turkey to polarization. Mainstream papers say Basbug has warned the ruling AKP not to open secularism to debate and Kurdish party DTP that the demands of its "political ally" PKK would not be accepted.

Iraq's Bolani Visits Ankara

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and Yeni Safak report Iraqi Interior Minister Jawad Al-Bolani is to visit Ankara on Tuesday to complete work on the memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed during Iraqi PM Maliki's visit to Turkey last month. If the MOU can be converted into an agreement, Iraq will extradite 150 PKK members, including Riza Altun, Cemil Bayik, and Murat Karayilan, to Turkey. Mainstream Hurriyet says Turkey is going to give an updated file on PKK activities to Bolani which includes the building of 20 new checkpoints to prevent terrorist infiltration into Turkey from

northern Iraq. The file contains detailed information about PKK camps in northern Iraq, says Hurriyet.

US Wants Turkey to Find Alternatives to Iran for Energy Cooperation

A column in mainstream Hurriyet says US Under Secretary of Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs Reuben Jeffery spoke to members of the press in Turkey. Hurriyet says Jeffery, whose visit to Turkey came just after that of Under Secretary Nicholas Burns, said that Turkish plans to produce natural gas in Iran should be replaced with projects with other regional countries, such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. "There is no shortage of gas in the region. The question is developing it in a responsible way with states that are politically stable and responsible to the international community," Jeffery said. Hurriyet points to the fact that neither country has the infrastructure to transport its gas to Turkey.

Barzani Reiterates Kurdish Rights over Kirkuk

Aksam and Yeni Safak report Kurdish regional administration president Massoud Barzani told "Kurdistan Students Union" in Erbil that the Kurds would not concede on the Kirkuk question. "We want our rights over Kirkuk back, and we are ready to pay any price for it. The problem should be resolved in line with the requirements of the Iraqi Constitution," Barzani said.

Kurdish Spokesman: PKK, PJAK Illegal Organizations

Hurriyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet and Yeni Safak report the spokesman of the Kurdish regional administration, Cemal Abdullah, said Monday they were "doing everything possible to avoid attacks on neighboring countries from Iraqi territory." "We consider the PKK and its affiliate PJAK as illegal organizations; they are not part of the political system in northern Iraq. We are working to promote our

ANKARA 00002408 002 OF 003

already good ties with Turkey," stressed Abdullah.

Meanwhile, Cumhuriyet reports Abdullah also said Iran has closed its four border crossings except for one with northern Iraq to protest the detention by Americans of an Iranian in Suleymaniye last week. Americans claim the Iranian arrested over arms smuggling was a member of the Revolutionary Guard.

Foreign Companies Interested in Buying Sabah, ATV

All papers report News Corp, ProSiebenSat.1, RTL Group, Czech CME and Greek Antenna TV are interested in buying Turkey's major daily Sabah and top-rated entertainment channel ATV, State Deposits and Insurance Fund (TMSF) said on Monday. TMSF seized the media assets in April and plans to auction the restructured company on November 7 with a minimum price set at USD 1.1 billion. Foreign companies will have to find local partners to bid with as a law restricts foreign ownership of broadcasters to 25 percent in Turkey.

Editorial Commentary on Moderate Islam; US Foreign Policy

Under the headline "The US and Moderate Islam," Milliyet columnist Can Dundar writes: "Richard Holbrooke, probably the next US Secretary of State, listed Malaysia and Turkey as moderate Islamic

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countries, adding that this is what the US wants to see in the Islamic geography...this leads to suspicion about US intentions for Turkey... A comprehensive search of US documents and reports shows that moderate Islam is a long-term US strategy. Rand Corporation, a powerful think tank in shaping American foreign policy suggested in 1990 that US administrations engage in close relationship with moderate figures of Islamic tendency....the State Department, in the 1999 religious freedom report, mentioned Fethullah Gulen by name as a moderate Islamic leader. This was followed by a report by Cheryl Barnard, the wife of former US Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad. She was clearly advising US foreign policy makers to form alliances with moderate Islamists, depicting them as the best ally for US interests compared to secularists and fundamentalists. In other words, US policy is not coming out of the blue - there is a strong basis for seeing it as a long term strategy."

Kubilay Celik observed in the nationalist daily Tercuman:

"Interestingly enough, the US administration, while occupying itself

with 'war with Iran' scenarios, did not prevent the Iranian leader's entrance into the country. The permission was for the UN summit but past events remind us of the fact that the US denied visas to Iranian leader Ahmedinejad and some others even to the UN. Despite protests by some groups, Ahmedinejad is also going to make a speech at Columbia University. His speech will be closely watched by the Bush administration and may even pave the way for bringing the two sides to the negotiation table. As for Syria, another interesting development is that Syria was invited to the US. It is very important that Syria is to be a part of the Middle East Quartet meeting in November. It seems the US, in the absence of international support as well as in an effort not to repeat the mistakes in Iraq, may be thinking of ways to find reconciliation with both Syria and Iran. The US may be looking for ways to drag them both to the negotiation table rather than focusing on anti-Iran or anti-Syria scenarios. This development will be very interesting to watch."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

- Prime Minister Erdogan addressed UN climate change conference, saying if its requirements are met, Turkey would sign the Kyoto Protocol.
- Parliament Speaker Koksall Toptan told a ceremony in Istanbul's Yildiz University that the new constitution will not make concessions on the main characteristics of the secular republic.

ANKARA 00002408 003 OF 003

- Ankara University Rector Nusret Aras said if the headscarf is allowed in universities through constitutional changes, the next step would be removing headscarf restrictions in high schools.
- The Turkish Parliament will kick off the new legislative year on October 1. President Abdullah Gul will address the parliament to mark the beginning of the new legislative year to be followed by a reception hosted by Parliament Speaker Koksall Toptan the same day.

International News

- Secretary Rice said Syria could attend an upcoming Middle East peace conference in Washington as part of an Arab League committee.
- A survey showing an eight percentage point drop in Nicolas Sarkozy's popularity suggests the French President's post-election honeymoon period may be coming to an end.
- Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki said the shooting deaths of civilians and other prior incidents involving US security contractor Blackwater pose "serious challenges to the sovereignty of Iraq" and cannot be accepted.
- Newsweek reports Vice President Cheney has considered provoking an exchange of military strikes between Iran and Israel in order to give the US a pretext to attack Iran.

WILSON